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STATE FOR IO FOR A/S SILVERBERG, IO/EDA,  
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USAID/DCHA/FFP FOR LAUREN LANDIS AND LESLIE PETERSEN  
USAID/DCHA/PPM FOR JON BRAUSE  
USDA FOR FAS - MCHAMBLISS, LREICH, RHUGHES

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR TONY P. HALL RETURNS TO ZIMBABWE  
DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN BUT WORSE

REFTEL: (A) 02 ROME 05058 (B) Harare 01147 (C) Harare  
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Summary  
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[1](#)1. SUMMARY: Three years after my 2002 visit (see Ref A), I returned to Zimbabwe August 11-13 and found the country again poised for a food-security crisis. As a result of the Government of Zimbabwe's (GOZ) misguided policies, drought, hyperinflation, and the associated lack of agricultural inputs, official estimates indicate at least 2.9 million Zimbabweans will require food aid in 2005-06. In reality, a much higher level of need is likely: up to 4.9 million may require food aid (FEWS NET AUGUST 05). I observed gross violations of human rights and was denied access to a settlement for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

[1](#)2. During my visit, I made it clear that the U.S. will continue to support food-insecure Zimbabweans despite concerns about reprehensible and self-defeating GOZ programs, policies and actions. Donor support in terms of food aid, ag inputs, and the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS will also be needed for the entire Southern Africa region. In Johannesburg, I announced a U.S. donation of \$51.8 million for 73,500 metric tons of food aid to be distributed by WFP among six Southern African nations, including Zimbabwe.

[1](#)3. We should support the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) efforts to alert the donor community regarding any remediable shortfalls for the procurement and distribution of basic ag inputs and extension services for the 2005 and 2006 planting seasons. END SUMMARY.

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Economic and Social Crisis  
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[1](#)4. Accompanied by Public Affairs Officer Carla Benini and USAID Program Specialist Sam Clark, I spent three days in Zimbabwe to examine local conditions and assess the food security situation with the help of the local US Mission. This visit followed a similar trip I made three years ago (see ref A).

[1](#)5. It was clear that optimistic GOZ assumptions forecasting food requirements do not hold water. GOZ predictions of food insecurity assume a market price of Zimbabwe Dollar (ZW) \$1,750/kg but August 2005 urban maize prices ranged from ZW\$3,430 to 4,000, about twice the GOZ projected price. Even the government-controlled media reports that wages are not keeping up with inflation. When I was there in 2002, the official rate put one US dollar worth ZW\$55; during my recent visit, a dollar was worth ZW\$18,000, and more than ZW\$40,000 on the black market. While the Ministry of Social Welfare claims to have arrangements in place to import 1.2 million MTs of grain, it freely admits that fuel shortages due to a lack of foreign exchange are interfering with the Grain Marketing Board's (GMB) logistics for distributing food aid within the country.

[1](#)6. GOZ attacks on poor settlements have accelerated negative trends in health indicators (an increase in infant mortality and over 30 percent prevalence of HIV among adults). As outlined by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlement Issues in July 2005, an estimated 700,000 people

have had their homes and or livelihoods destroyed by the GOZ Operation "Throw out the trash." There are repeated allegations that these displacements of low-income residents throughout Zimbabwe are primarily from areas that do not support the incumbent administration. The health

implications, especially for prevention of HIV and AIDS, where home-based care programs were disrupted, are very severe.

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What We Saw  
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17. Access Denied / Operation Throw out the Trash: Our site visit to Hatcliff Farm revealed the complete destruction of an entire community built under bilateral agreements involving the GOZ, World Bank and USAID. Just three months prior, during the coldest time of year, some 30,000 residents who had legally valid leases to their homes, were forced out by police and dogs and a residential area the size of 10 football fields was bulldozed flat. Interviews with residents revealed extraordinary suffering as they attempted to rebuild with limited resources. While I was walking through the camp, I was approached several times by residents asking me for food and blankets. Tents supplied by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) that could provide shelter have been denied pending GOZ approval. My visit to the GOZ-developed Hopely Farms resettlement area coincided with the delivery of a USG- and EU-funded WFP shipment of food aid for over 300 families. Despite the food shipment, GOZ officials from the Ministry of Justice refused to allow me access to the camp and to the IDPs, citing arbitrary requirements for written permission from a separate ministry.

18. Based on reports from IOM, the residents were moved to the site in July without water and were provided food aid consisting solely of un-milled corn. Residents are only permitted to come and go if they report to the paramilitary that control the site.

19. The battered relief community: Team meetings with NGOs demonstrated their plight in trying to provide support for food aid and agricultural inputs throughout Zimbabwe (see ref C). As found in 2002, the GOZ refuses to facilitate the operation of NGOs trying to deliver humanitarian assistance. The NGO consortium, C-SAFE, which had managed to import 25,000 MT of food last year, has only been able to distribute 15,000 MT due to GOZ restrictions. A reported 10,000 MTs have been denied clearance in Durban, South Africa. Last-minute GOZ restrictions on NGOs in 2004, requiring that they import all seed stocks rather than buy locally, contributed to shortfalls in seed supplies throughout the country for the planting season in 2004-05.

10. "The Government of Zimbabwe has it in hand": During my meeting with Zimbabwe's Minister of Social Welfare, (see ref B) Minister Goche stressed that, while the GOZ does face problems, "we are coping" and the situation is in hand. He also stated that the GOZ is willing to accept humanitarian aid from those of good will so long as it "complements our efforts." My team's overall impression is that the GOZ is very concerned with saving face and reluctant to share basic data related to the food emergency. For example, the GOZ does not share data on the amount of food grain or seed stocks it has on hand, seriously hampering donor efforts to assess and plan for food and ag input requirements.

11. WFP Food Aid in support of HIV/AIDS in Mutare: In Mutare, near the Mozambique border, the team visited a joint WFP-Africare home-based care feeding program that is improving the lives of 3,000 HIV/AIDS victims and affected persons. The team learned about an innovative pilot program that encourages greater involvement of men in home-based care. During the presentations a plea was voiced to include anti-retroviral (ARV) medicines in the program's home based care kits. This WFP/Africare program should be considered for the introduction of ARVs.

12. FAO support for agricultural inputs and response to HIV/AIDS: the team visited demonstration gardens implemented by FAO through a program that distributes drip irrigation kits, an approach that is important to meet the needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS. The GOZ imposed last-minute restrictions on NGO seed procurement for the last planting season and over 45 percent of farmers ran out of seed. FAO and other agencies are aggressively working to avoid similar shortfalls for the 2005/06 planting season. A preliminary 2005 report (ZimVAC) indicates that more than 1/3 of farmers will need to buy seed for the next cropping season and 15 percent are unsure where they would obtain seeds. This is a serious problem given the hyperinflation and reduced buying power. We look to FAO to alert the donor community as to any shortfalls for the procurement and distribution of basic agricultural inputs and extension services.

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## Press Briefings

13. At press briefings in Harare and Johannesburg, I made the following points:

- "I remember when this country was a breadbasket of Southern Africa. Today, the breadbasket is empty, thanks to counterproductive land reform policies and a drought that has made the situation even worse."
- Commenting on being denied access to the Hopely Farm, "This is just the sort of bureaucracy that the UN Special Envoy spoke out against. We can't address the suffering of these people if we can't see them and assess their needs."
- "The United States will stand by the people of Zimbabwe, because there is no place in politics when it comes to feeding hungry people."
- "It would be easy to turn your back on this government, but we can't turn our back on the people."

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

14. This visit focused primarily on Zimbabwe, but the donor community needs to be mindful of the emerging needs of the five other countries in the region: Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Zambia. The announcement of a US\$51.8 million regional donation is a step in the right direction, but we must urge other donors to assist in regional and country specific appeals. The current WFP appeal for the Southern Africa Region has a shortfall of US\$199 million, the equivalent of 357,000 MT.

15. It is clear that the current problems in Zimbabwe are largely man-made, resulting from misguided GOZ policies. While we must disassociate ourselves from the reprehensible

GOZ actions, we cannot abandon the people of Zimbabwe. Clear evidence of violations of humanitarian principles and human rights were found. These should be addressed in as many venues as possible.

16. There is a consensus that if actions are taken soon, despite large out-migration of talented educated persons, Zimbabwe still has the essential human capital of dedicated citizenry required for long-term development.

17. In the short-term, so long as donors provide adequate, in-time assistance to keep the pipeline supplied, the combination of existing GOZ and related WFP, FAO, and NGO assistance infrastructure is in place to avert famine.

18. We should support FAO's efforts to alert the donor community regarding any remediable shortfalls for the procurement and distribution of basic agricultural inputs and extension services for the 2005 and 2006 planting seasons.

19. Based on the observations in Mutare and discussions with USAID-Harare and others, Zimbabwe has major shortfalls in international donor support for HIV/AIDS. In particular we hope that the GOZ can be encouraged to resume efforts to obtain funding from the Global Fund by revising its proposals to realistic funding levels, with plans for programming to be implemented by NGOs and multilateral agencies. Despite problems with GOZ policies, expanded funding must be found to increase access to ARVs.

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